



ANIMAL DEVAR TORAH: YETZER HARA

SUPPOSE YOU'RE OUT TAKING A HIKE ON A TRAIL IN THE WILDERNESS:

- There's no one else around and you come upon a donkey that's carrying a pack-load; the animal had stumbled and fallen, and it was unable to get up.
- We know that Torah teaches we are responsible to help the animal get up on its feet.

BUT SUPPOSE YOU COME UPON *TWO* ANIMALS ON THE TRAIL:

- The first one you see belongs to a *friend*, and it's lying down, weighted under its packs—and your friend is trying to get it back up on its feet but can't do it alone.
- The second donkey you see belongs to someone you don't like, someone who has been mean to you; this animal is standing, but its pack has come loose and is dangling on the ground—and the pack is too heavy and bulky for the owner to lift it up and retie it.

WHICH ANIMAL WOULD YOU ATTEND TO FIRST, AND WHY?

- Seemingly one would first attend to the friend's donkey, because it is in discomfort, maybe even pain.
- But the Talmud teaches that we are first to reload the donkey of the person we don't like.

WHY DO YOU THINK WE ARE TAUGHT TO DO THAT?

- Most of us have a bad tendency, in Hebrew it's called a yetzer hara, to ignore or even take pleasure when something bad happens to someone who has been mean to us.
- Have you ever felt that way?
- Did you act on that feeling?
- The Talmud teaches that when we have a choice, we should help someone we don't like first to help us overcome our bad tendency, our yetzer hara.

THE TALMUD IS TEACHING US THAT IT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAT WE LEARN TO OVERCOME OUR EVIL INCLINATION THAN IT IS TO RELIEVE AN ANIMAL'S DISCOMFORT.

- Why do you think it's more important that we learn to overcome our bad tendency?
- If we let our bad tendency rule us, that is, if we come to ignore or even take pleasure in the unhappiness and bad luck of people we don't like, what might that lead to?



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